

VAN VRANKEN
ON
SOCINIANISM.

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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

Princeton, N. J.

BT 1480 .V3 1841 c.1

Van Vranken, Samuel

Alexander, 1792-1861.

Socinianism, subversive of
Christianity

The Society

ERRATA.

- Page 5, line 13, insert "him" between from and that.
15, 16, for "preparation;" read preparative.
21, 9, for "sacrifice" read sacrifices.
38, 1, erase "the Son of."
40, 15, for "path" read faith.
50, 4, for "denials" read deniers.
51, 6, for "question" read religion.
do 10, for "case" read ease.
63, 6, for "motion" read motive.
58, 11, for "reasons" read reason.



SOCINIANISM

SUBVERSIVE OF CHRISTIANITY.

A SERMON

By SAMUEL A. VAN VRANKEN,

Minister of the Gospel and Pastor of the R. D. Church in Broome-st.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST

OF THE

CONSISTORY OF SAID CHURCH.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER, 58 CANAL STREET.

1841.

Printed by W. B. & T. Smith, 89 Nassau, and 128 Fulton-sts.

SOCINIANISM

SUBVERSIVE OF CHRISTIANITY.

I JOHN ii. 23.

*Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath
not the Father.*

OUR object from these words is not so much to show *directly*, that they who deny the Son, have not the Father, and consequently are without God, and without hope in the world; as to do the same thing *indirectly*, by showing that denying the proper deity of Christ, necessarily involves the denial of all the great peculiarities of the revealed system; denies scope to its prophecies; significance to its

appointments; definiteness to its language; meaning to the convictions and hopes which it inspires; solidity to its arguments; and in a word, to show that the denial of Christ's divinity, is the denial of that, which is interwoven with the whole texture of revealed truth, and imparts to it its highest glory, strength, and efficacy.

To believe that Christ is the Son of the Living God, in the sense which implies his participation of a common nature with the Father, is the leading act of evangelical faith, and naturally associates with it, the belief of that entire system of doctrine which makes the gospel what it is.

It is not necessary to prove that the system which rejects the divinity of Christ, necessarily rejects the doctrine of representation, atonement

for sin, regeneration by the spirit of God, justification by faith, and other kindred doctrines; since the rejection of these is avowed and gloried in, as evidencing the superior claims of the system to reasonableness and liberality. Keeping these things in sight, it will be easy to evince, that unless a man be willing to renounce all the blessings which are wrapped up in these doctrines, he is bound, as he values the everlasting interests of his soul, not to spurn away from that mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh."

In preparing the argument which I am about to offer, I have not hesitated to avail myself to some extent of the reasonings and illustrations of one, who has most nobly vindicated the honor of our Exalted Lord. I

refer you to Massillon on the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

In support of the position that the doctrine of Christ's supreme deity pervades the whole system of revelation, we adduce.

I. In the first place, the character which is given of the Messiah, in the prophecies and appointments in which his advent is announced, together with the expectations which were thereby created. Nothing is more evident than that the divine communications made to man, and the whole religious economy as established by authority previous to the advent of Christ, were designed, as they were adapted, to direct the faith of the Church to the Messiah, as a being exalted in his claims upon the

confidence and reverence of man, far above any thing that could be due to a mere creature.

Although the first promise announces the Messiah as the "seed of the woman;" yet so much meaning, and so much dignity must be attached even to that designation, as to adapt it to the exigencies of that tremendous occasion, in which every circumstance was a sign that all was lost. That God who apportions his consolations to the anguish he would assuage, spoke to our guilty parents of *one*, the contemplation of whose character and might would afford relief, and administer comfort under the burden of those woes, which they had brought upon themselves and upon the world. If he did not speak to them of one who could restore the

tremendous ruin which sin had made; one mighty to save beyond all created power, to what purpose did he speak at all? since less than this, would have been far enough from meeting the exigencies of the occasion.

In that succession of prophecies by which, through a series of ages, God was pleased to communicate his purposes to man, we see the same pre-eminence given to the character of him who was to come. To *this* the prophetic spirit hastens, on *this* it glows, and expatiates, till the rapt seer is lost amidst the glories of the Messiah. He is indeed represented as partaking of a nature like our own; but he is called a Star, a Sun, the Glory of Israel, the Light of the Gentiles, Wonderful, Counsellor, the

Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace, Jehovah, our Righteousness. He is represented as one who was set up from everlasting; who when there was no depths was brought forth; who when God prepared the heavens was there, when he appointed the foundations of the earth was by him, as one brought up with him; was daily his delight rejoicing always before him.

The organization of the church in the family of Abraham seems to have been little more than a measure preparatory to the coming of the Messiah. All its sacrifices and appointments directed the faith of believers to *him*, as to a God: and in the almost endless revolutions which the church underwent, nothing appears to have been regarded as of importance, compared

with the preservation of the promise of the Messiah, of which the church was the appointed depository. She might exult in her glory, or sigh over the wreck of her greatness, it appears to have been enough that the promise was preserved; and the great object of that promise was kept constantly before the mind, by every rite, by every victim, by every drop of sacrificial blood required by the Mosaic ritual to be shed.

From the first promise made to Adam, down to the revelation of the Holy Ghost to the venerable Simeon, for four thousand years; the most encouraging promises, the most magnificent predictions, the most significant ritual appointments, produced and preserved amidst all revolutions the loftiest expectations of the coming

of the Messiah. From the promises the pious looked to him; from the ritual they looked to him; from Jerusalem they looked to him; from Babylon they looked to him; he was the Star of their night and the Sun of their day; hope clung to *him*; children were pointed to *him*; and age was supported in infirmity and death by the faith of his advent. He was represented as the desire of all nations, and the very shaking of the nations was only to prepare for his coming.

But who is he for whose coming such mighty preparations are made, and such ardent desires are cherished? The opposer of our doctrine answers "*a mere man.*" A mere man. Was it for *this* that the world was kept in a process of preparation,

and in a state of expectation for so many ages? Was the ocean rocked into a tempest and kept heaving so long, only to waft this feather? This "seed of the woman," the promise of whom to our first parents, was the antidote of God for the horrors of conviction that they had sunk a world in death; this Wonderful; this Counsellor; this Mighty God; this Father of eternity; this Prince of Peace; this Jehovah our righteousness, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting, who was with God when he prepared the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, as one brought up with him; a mere man! How is it, that none of those terms which had hitherto been employed to express the highest honors to which prophet, priest or king,

had ever yet been exalted among men, were deemed adequate to represent Messiah's glory? Or *these* failing, were there none in the vocabulary of the thrones and dominions, the principalities and the powers of heaven, that were sufficient for the due expression of his majesty? Must God lavish upon him all the glory of his own incommunicable titles and attributes? Or having done so, could he have designed less, than that the Church should receive him in the character, which those titles and attributes imply? If mortals bow the knee, and worship as Jehovah *him*, whom the Father calls by that incommunicable and gracious name, and whom he commands the angels of his presence to worship, shall they be judged guilty of idolatry? as they

surely are, if the Messiah be not God. If guilty, to whose charge must the sin be laid? Certainly not to theirs; and if not to theirs, let his enemies declare the necessary conclusion; our tongue refuses to pronounce the blasphemy. But it was designed that the Messiah should be received and honored by the church as God, for the very reason that he is so called—*“he was God.”* So Simeon received him—so all that waited for the consolation of Israel received him; or they were behind the impious in their expectations from the majesty of the oracle. For even the unbelieving Jews, who regarded only the humanity of Christ, treated his claims to the Messiahship with scorn. They saw nothing in him that was answerable to the descriptions given

by the prophets of God's Messiah. They could never believe that it was *he*, whom David by the spirit called Lord and God. And had they been right in regarding him as a mere man, they would have been right in rejecting him as the Messiah. On the other hand, the acknowledgement of his Messiahship and divinity, always in point of fact, went together; because they mutually implied each other. Whoever acknowledged him to be *the Christ*, acknowledged him to be the Son of God. What a wretched commentary is the Socinian doctrine upon the preparation; announcements and appointments of God for the advent of his beloved Son. And mark how it strips language of meaning, covers the expectations of the ancient pious with scorn,

and justifies the demand of the Jews for the execution of Christ, as a blasphemer against God !

II. In the second place, take into view the specific objects of Messiah's coming into the world, in connection with the hopes which the contemplation of these objects inspired. We shall say nothing in this place of what he was to accomplish in the discharge of the duties of his prophetic office. That he was to appear in the character of a Priest, it were no better than a piece of rank infidelity to deny. "Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedec," says God to him by the mouth of David ; and Zechariah says he shall be a *Priest*, as well as a king upon his throne. In this character, from the very nature of the appoint-

ment, as well as from the reasoning of the apostle, "it was necessary that he should have somewhat to offer." The victim, according to Isaiah, was to be himself; his soul was to be made an offering for sin. It was a prominent doctrine of the Mosaic law, that a transfer was to be made of the sins of God's Israel to the victim appointed to be offered. Isaiah thus applies this doctrine to Christ. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Our sins being imputed to him, he was to be wounded for our transgressions; he was to be bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was to be laid upon him, and by his stripes we were to be healed.

According to Daniel he was to finish transgressions, and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.

As King he was to reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. His kingdom was to be an everlasting kingdom. "Thy throne O God is forever and ever." And he was to reign in "such a manner, that the whole earth with its strength of iron and brass, its splendor of gold and silver, smitten by the rod of his mouth, should be broken in pieces like a potter's vessel;" "for thus," says Calvin, "do the prophets foretell the magnificence of his kingdom." He was to reign in the hearts and over the affections of his subjects, making them willing to submit to him

in the day of his power in the beauty of holiness. As Prince of Peace, he was to hush the tumult of the world and so to subdue the spirit of violence, that there should be nothing to hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain.

Here are objects worthy of the divine councils, and worthy of the divine hand ; calculated to raise expectations and hopes lofty and ardent as ever animated the bosoms of the most pious sons of Abraham. Admonished by daily sacrifices of sins, which those sacrifices could not take away ; knowing and feeling that those which they offered year by year continually, could not make the comers there unto perfect, or satisfy as pertaining to the conscience ; why should they not look for, and hasten

unto the coming of *his* day, who by the sacrifice of himself should forever take away all their sins? And why when wearied and discouraged by any thing they could do to fulfil the righteousness of the law, should they not glory in *his* advent, who was to come not only to make an end of sin, but to bring in an everlasting righteousness?

In contemplating the limited extent of the church, and the oppressions which it endured; in contemplating the idolatrous abominations of the heathen world, and the almost universal prevalence of the most shameful moral impurities; why should not the believing Israelite rejoice in anticipating the establishment of Messiah's throne? Why should he not dwell with holy pleasure on those promises,

which contemplated the overthrow of idolatry, a reign of righteousness, and the universal prevalence of holiness and peace?

But mark the blasting effects of the doctrine which denies the divinity of Christ upon all the joyous anticipations of the believing Jew. It tells him that the sacrifice of his dispensation, have no relation to any sacrifice to be made by the Messiah; that the Messiah's priesthood means nothing; that the declaration, that his soul was to be made an offering for sin means nothing; that the doctrine of the atonement is a mere fancy; that the Messiah is indeed to be cut off, but his death is to be only the death of a martyr. As for an everlasting righteousness, whatever the expression may mean, he must go about to es-

tablish a righteousness of his own. Before such doctrine as this, how would hope languish, and expectation die. The burden of unatoned for sin, would be left to press with crushing weight upon the conscience, and arouse the fearful anticipations of coming judgment, and condemnation.

As for that kingdom of righteousness and peace, that everlasting kingdom, whose blessings are to extend around the world, it is something says this doctrine, very different from what might be supposed to be implied in the expression, "thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," as of divine honors were to be paid to the Messiah. The kingdom will be found to consist, not of those who worship him, but of those who refuse to worship him. The many ten

thousands who may suffer martyrdom for owning him as God will be, (as the Roman Pliny has represented them to be,) the victims of a miserable superstition. They only will be true subjects who refuse to honor the Son as they honor the Father. And when these shall have succeeded to supplant the principles of those who worship Christ, and pray and labor to advance his honor, and spread his gospel through the world, will the kingdom appear in the full development of its glory.

Contemplate the prophets of God putting the power of language to its utmost task to describe the Mediator's kingdom, and the blessings of his reign; contemplate the believing Hebrew elevated with the loftiest expectations, and rejoicing as Abra-

ham did to see the day of Christ; then look at the interpretations of the doctrine we oppose, and their necessary results; and say whether a sickly sadness does not pervade your spirits, and whether strange and unwelcome thoughts do not crowd into your troubled minds. Admit these interpretations—deny the divinity of Christ, and what is left in the sacrifices of the Old Testament Church, but rivers of blood, which while they could not take away sin, had no reference to any that could? What in her numerous types but a succession of gloomy shadows having no relation to any substance? What in all that her prophets have written concerning the Mediator's work, but the madness of poetry, without the inspiration of prophecy? What in the

blessings that were to succeed his advent, but the world plunged into a despicable idolatry? What in that magnificent kingdom over which he was to reign, but an inconsiderable sect—the followers, to use the language of another, of a miserable Socinus?

These are some of the triumphs of boasted reason over the simplicity of faith. Others worthy to be associated with them will appear in the progress of this discourse.

III. In the third place, if we examine the doctrine of Jesus Christ concerning himself, we shall quickly be reduced to the necessity of adoring him as God, or denouncing him as a man. If the prophets had spoken of him in terms of extravagance, cal-

culated to raise him to honors that were not his own, we look to him to remove every false impression, and to make known the truth concerning his person and work. But what does he do? Does he tell us that David who called him Lord and God was mad? or that Isaiah who called him the Mighty God and the Father of eternity, dealt in rapsody? Nothing like it. He gives his sanction to all that the prophets had written concerning himself, his kingdom and his work. With the deniers of his divinity, he is but another Plato, or another Saccas, a teacher of a new philosophy. But hear his own account of this matter. I came forth from God. All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law

of Moses, in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me.

After considering what he says of himself, say what good man would ever dare to use the language which he constantly employs? Before Abraham was, says he, "I am." (God's incommunicable name.) Addressing the Father, he says, "glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again. All power is given to me in heaven and on earth." He not only performs miracles in his own name, but he professes to communicate this power to others. Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and over all the power of the enemy; heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead,

cast out devils, freely ye have received, freely give. He professes to have power to forgive sins. He suffered himself to be worshipped. He claims that all men should honor him, as they honor the Father. He promises to be with his disciples always, even unto the end of the world. He declares himself to be Lord of the Sabbath: claims to be the Judge of quick and dead; and gives assurance that hereafter he should be seen coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He announces himself as the only way to the Father. He came to establish a holy and a universal kingdom: a kingdom not of this world, the administration of which, requires the exercise of all power in heaven and on earth; and all the

subjects of which must be born again. He came to be brought as a lamb to the slaughter. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. He came as the good shepherd to lay down his life for his sheep. He came in one word, to be the author of eternal salvation to his people, "I give unto them eternal life, and none shall be able to pluck them out of my hand."

Compare all this, with the language and conduct of the most distinguished servants of God, with whose presence and ministry the world has ever been blessed. Did Abraham the friend of God speak in this way? Did Moses his servant, favored above all men in the intimacy of his communion with heaven, speak in this way? Did

Elijah that man of miracles take such freedoms with God? Did ever prophet claim a power of his own to work miracles; or presume to delegate such a power to others? Did any affect to forgive sins? Did any claim worship in conjunction with God? Would any have submitted to be worshipped? Paul and Barnabas rent their clothes and cried out to arrest such sin and folly from being practised on themselves; and so would every other man of God have done. Who besides Christ ever claimed to have had glory with the Father before the world was? That he was one with him? or that he would preside in the universal judgment? What martyr ever regarded his own death as a ransom for the sins of the world? Or who ever

professed to bestow the gift of eternal life and to secure the enjoyment of the boon by the defences of a power paramount in heaven and earth, and all his own? If holy men would have trembled at the bare thought of these assumptions; where was the humility of Christ; or where was his zeal for his Father's glory, when he assumed these high prerogatives.

Compare further the language and conduct of Christ, with what the deniers of his divinity admit concerning the objects of his ministry; and in which so far as they go, we agree with them. We agree that he came to confirm the doctrine of the unity of the divine essence, and yet he declares that he and his Father are one. He came to rescue the world from the worship of demons and men; and

yet he says that all men should honor *him*, as they honor the Father. He came to vindicate the undivided sovereignty of God over the universe of matter and of spirit; and yet he commissions his disciples to perform the most stupendous miracles, in both departments in his own name. He came to maintain the divine prerogative in the moral kingdom; and yet he claims for himself the power of forgiving sins. He came to detach all hearts from undue affection for created objects, and to unite them to God; and yet he so attaches them to himself, that his disciples must forsake all to follow him, and be ready to lay down their lives for his sake. He came to teach all men to recognize their accountability to God alone, as judge of all; and yet he declares

that before himself the universe shall be arraigned in judgment. He came to direct intelligent beings to God as the only source of divine blessings; and yet he assumes to give unto them eternal life. Admit his divinity, and his instructions are worthy of himself, and of the fidelity which he owed to the Father who sent him. Deny it, and what are we to say of the *mere man*, the *good man*, the *meek*, the *self-denying man* of the Socinian theology? Had he come to confound all truth; to distract all minds; to alienate all hearts from God, and to divide with him the glory of universal empire, what could he have done that he did not do? By what means could he have pushed his pretensions further; or made greater inroads upon the monarchy of God?

Were we to admit for a moment that the language of Jesus Christ could, by the help of a large share of ingenuity, be made to convey the meaning, which the enemies of his divinity ascribe to it; the admission would be at the expense of all that is valuable in the character of a messenger of God. The multitude for whose use it was intended, never have, and never can so understand it. And it were disingenuous to employ language in one sense, which will invariably be understood in another. Jesus knew how he would be understood by his hearers. He knew what interpretation was put upon his declaration that he was the Son of God; for he was charged with blasphemy, and his life was sought on that very account; because by it,

he was judged to have made himself equal with God. And yet he goes on, and perpetuates in the church the occasion of perpetual error. Why was he not admonished by the prophetic spirit of what would be the result to the world of his method of speaking of himself? Or why, even without the help of a prophetic spirit; did not his human sagacity perceive, and his goodness provide against results, so humiliating and destructive to man?

VI. In the fourth place, let us examine the doctrine of the apostles concerning the character of Jesus Christ, and the nature of his mediatorial work. To them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and they were the authorised ex-

pounders of the doctrines of their master. If they regarded him as a mere man; what manner of man could they have conceived him to be?

They call him the "image of the invisible God;" "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." John says, "he was God." Paul calls him, "God our Savior; and God over all." Of his pre-existence they allege that "he was in the beginning with God," "that he is before all things." They represent him as "knowing all things;" as "head over all things;" as "filling all things." They ascribe to him immutability. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day, and forever." And the attributes of independence, eternity and omnipotence

are clearly implied in the expression —“which was and is to come, the Almighty.” John ascribes to him the work of creation; and Paul says that “by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, and that by him all things consist.” To his spirit they ascribe the inspiration of the prophets. To his voice the resurrection of the dead. To his bar they refer the universe for judgment. And to *him* they declare that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, what manner of man is this? If they speak of the throne of God, Jesus Christ is upon it—if of the glory

of heaven, it is the glory of the Son of the Lord God and of the *Lamb*; if of the hallelujah of the redeemed, their language is, “unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” If the apostles burn with zeal, it is to serve Christ. If they desire to depart, it is that they may be with Christ. David exclaimed, “whom have I in heaven but thee?” Was Paul so unlike him, that instead of associating his happiness in heaven with the idea of the presence of God, he anticipated it only from the presence of a man? Is it around the throne of such an one, that the rainbow of the covenant bends? Or was it the vision of a man, that

ministered to the triumph of the dying Stephen? The apostles honor the Son as they honor the Father, in their prayers—so they honor him in their baptisms—so they honor him in their benedictions—and so they honor him in their argument. Mark an instance of the latter in Heb. 2d chap. “If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord?” The argument is from the less to the greater, and in this lies its force. If they who contemned the ministration of angels who are the less, received the just reward of their disobedience, how shall we escape if we neglect the

ministrations of Christ the greater ; the Lord whom the angels are commanded to worship ? Here is an argument worthy of the spirit of wisdom by which the apostle wrote. Admit the doctrine we oppose, and what have we ? If the ministration of angels, those high intelligences of heaven, was honored by the just judgments of God upon every transgressor, how shall we escape, if we neglect the ministrations of a man, who is greatly their inferior ! So the men who will not bow their reason to the path of Christ would have Paul to argue ; and that too, in the pause of a most lofty celebration of the divine honors of the Son of God ! What is this but to make an idiot of the apostle, and to burlesque the inspirations of the Holy One ?

Of the superiority of Christ over mere men, as a principle of argument, we hazard nothing by the remark, that if he be not infinitely greater than Moses, greater than Aaron, greater than all priests and all prophets, if he be not God, then is a large portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews a tissue of absurdities; and he who wrote it, while he undertook to teach others, had need himself to be taught the first principles of reason and argument.

As with the arguments of the apostles, so with their scheme of salvation; it requires that in the Savior should "dwell all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Its weight would crush every support, less powerful than this. The blood of atonement which it demands,

must be as Paul calls it, the blood of God. He on whom help is laid, must be mighty to vindicate the honor of the divine law ; to contend successfully with principalities and powers ; to effect a resurrection from the death of sin, quickening whom he will. He must be able to hold the subjects of his renewing grace with a hand, from which no power can pluck them. He must attend to their interest in heaven ; he must be with them on earth. He must know all their sorrows, that he may comfort them ; all their weaknesses, that he may strengthen them ; all their temptations, that he may succor them. He must know all the wiles of their enemies ; and he must be able to defeat them. He must conquer death and the grave, to secure

the joyful resurrection of such as sleep in him. He must be head over all things; to subordinate them to the safety and ultimate triumph of his church.

But who of all created beings is sufficient for these things? They who deny the proper deity of Christ should call upon the apostles, not only to change their language concerning his personal glory; but also to tear down the whole frame work of salvation, which they have reared up; and in the place of it talk of some moral reform, which requires none of the might of *him*, in whom has been rolled the burden of a world's redemption. If a mere man can be the author of salvation; it is not the eternal salvation of the gospel, which the apostles preached, and in

which is placed the hope of a ruined world.

It is manifest that the writers of the New Testament attest the superiority of Christ over all creatures, not merely by individual expressions, which if they imply any thing, imply his essential divinity; but it constitutes the great pervading spirit of their writings; mixes up with all their doctrines, and gives character to all their statements. It is the source of their blessings, the directory of their worship, the postulate of their arguments, the glory of their heaven, the alpha and the omega of their system of salvation. Could unbelievers in the supreme deity of Christ have written of him, as they have written? Could they have ascribed to a mere piece of humanity,

all the titles, all the attributes, all the works, and all the worship of the Almighty God? Could they have gone nowhere without finding him? As if "he filled immensity with his presence?" Could they have found him nowhere, without bowing to him as if he were "God over all blessed forever?" Could they not have crowned their message of gladness to the world with a richer benediction than that which closes the sacred cannon, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," as if *his* blessing secured the consummation of immortal glory? Believe it who will, I trust you never can.

V. Lastly, let us examine the spirit of the Gospel ministry, in connection with the divinity of Christ;

and compare it with the spirit which always, and necessarily attends the opposite doctrine. That system which represents the condition of man to be such, that nothing short of the interposition of an Almighty arm can effect his deliverance—which represents the ruin total, and an interest in the merits of Christ as revealed in the gospel indispensable to salvation, demands from all who are engaged in furthering the merciful designs of God, a spirit in which compassion, benevolence, self-denial, and earnestness to do good to others, are exhibited in their most amiable forms, and in their most efficient combination.

The most perfect illustrations of this spirit is furnished by Christ himself. He comes as if he felt and

sorrowed for the lost. He comes as one who from heaven had heard the groaning of the prisoners, and had it in heart to loose those that were appointed to death ; to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. He comes administering consolation to the wretched ; and he announces it as among the most distinguished proofs of his Messiahship, that he preached the gospel to the poor.”

From the master, the disciples catch the spirit by which they are animated, and they proceed in their ministry, as if they *felt* for the guilt, and wretchedness, and danger of those to whom they are sent. Every where in the midst of persecutions they warn men to fly from the wrath to come—they persuade them by the

terrors of the Lord—they beseech them to be reconciled to God. They travail with them in birth till Christ be formed in them the hope of glory—they urge their doctrines home to the conscience, with a directness and pungency of appeal, that forces from the trembling spirit the cry “what must I do to be saved?” Here we have the spirit of martyrdom, and of missions. The spirit which made Paul exclaim in view of bonds and imprisonments, “none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” The spirit, which in the desire to save the lost, en-

counters perils on the deep, in the wilderness, and among the heathen. The spirit which carries the lamp of life to the benighted, and sacrifices life itself in the effort to promote their salvation.

If on the other hand, the members of the human family be regarded as by no means dead in trespasses and sins, but only not quite such as they ought to be, and might be without a divine deliverer ; we have little right to look for more than the stateliness of philosophical teaching—efforts to influence the influential, court to the great and contempt for the poor—a ministry that may command compliments, but not a ministry for our world ; for its guilt and pollution, and wretchedness, and poverty, and degradation ; a ministry not adapted

to avert the doom that rests upon it.

What we have a right to look for from the denials of the divinity of Christ and its attendant doctrines, we may see, and no more. What history informs us that they have ever acted as if they considered their system as of any great consequence themselves? Particularly, with what evidence are we furnished that they have been intent upon the spiritual welfare of such as were the special objects of Christ's ministry? In what hovels have they been found, instructing and consoling the wretched inmates? On what pagan coast are they seen, bearing in their hands the standard of the cross? In what dark interior do you hear of them, enduring hardness in their zeal to

promote the salvation of the heathen? These questions are not asked with a view to insult over them, as if they were recreant to their principles. No. It is the fault of the doctrine. Their question is one from which the spirit that sighs over the wretchedness of the guilty, is utterly foreign; and they act as much in consistency with their theology, as their case, in leaving the missionary field to perpetual desolation.

If however anything be attempted in the way of missions it must inevitably fail of success. The following extract from history is worthy of consideration in this connection. "They," says Mosheim, speaking of those who denied the divinity of Christ, "also sent Missionaries to several places towards the conclusion

of this (16) century in order to make proselytes, and erect new congregations. These Missionaries seemed every way qualified to gain credit to the cause in which they had embarked; as some of them were distinguished by the lustre of their birth, and others by the extent of their learning and the power of their eloquence; and yet notwithstanding their uncommon advantages, they failed almost every where in their attempts." And why should they not fail? While they denied the omnipotence of the Savior, they could carry with them no pledge of forgiveness in the blood of atonement: with them there was no spirit to quicken the dead in trespasses and sins: they had no balm for the wounds of the conscience: the dying

they could not point to the resurrection and the life: their system having no adaptation to the wretchedness of a ruined world, finds no place for sympathy; it furnishes no motion to zeal; it is without an object, worthy of the spirit of the ministry of Jesus Christ. It may enlist birth, and learning, and eloquence; but is cold, academical, philosophical. It greets the wise, the mighty and the noble; and while it is over anxious for an introduction into the courts of the great, and into the halls of the learned; it regards not the abodes of the ignorant, nor the lamentable cries of the broken hearted penitent. It passes by on the other side. O how unlike is the spirit of all this, to that of *him*, who was anointed to preach good tidings

to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, to comfort all that mourn ; and who said the poor have the gospel preached unto them. The spirit of this ministry comes home to the heart, whose religious sensibilities have been awakened to a just sense of its guilt and wretchedness ; and it is felt to be the offspring of the bosom of one, who while he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, for the salvation of the lost. The bare consideration of this ministry might melt a frozen heart. The other comes over it like a winter's blast, freezing the circling blood of sym-

pathy and compassion, and blighting the sweet fruits of love.

Here we rest our argument. And we ask you brethren, whether Jesus Christ be not God? Let no one object his acknowledged inferiority to the Father. He is inferior in his human nature—he is inferior in his official relations as Mediator. But all this is explained by the single text just quoted. “He who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, . . . took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

But the doctrine is too mysterious to be comprehended, and therefore cannot be believed. Indeed! who by searching can find out God? And who can find out the Almighty

to perfection? And because this cannot be done; God is to be made a liar, by the rejection of the testimony which he has given of his Son. It were infinitely better to believe the divine attestation to any thing, however surpassing our comprehension, than to subscribe to the doctrine, which requires that language should be understood after this manner—"the mighty God" signifies a *feeble man*; the Father of Eternity; *the child of a day*—which renders it necessary to account for the ascription of the creation of all things to a being, that had no existence till long after the universe was made—which requires that *he* should be regarded as a meek and holy man, who claims for himself all the attributes and prerogatives of God—

which represents that in all that God promised to the patriarchs of a deliverer; in all he announced by the prophets to set forth his glory and to exalt the conceptions of his kingdom and blessings; in all that he did in the government of the church, and of the world to prepare for his coming, till expectation was raised on earth to intensity, and in heaven to wonder; nothing more was designed, than that a man should be born, whose ministry was to result in the establishment of an inconsiderable sect which should deny all the prerogatives that are ascribed to him; and in the transfer of the worship of the rest of the world from the deities they adored, to himself as the object of their idolatries. The belief of the first,

is a reasonable homage to the infinitude of God; the belief of the doctrine which implies the rest, is an eternal reproach upon reason itself. And yet these things, with many others equally monstrous must be received before the doctrine of the divinity of Christ can be rejected by any, who acknowledge a revelation from God. But if these things put all reasons, as well as all revelation at defiance; there is the divinity of Christ incontestibly established; and the eternal hostility between Socinianism and Christianity is manifested. Abide together, they cannot. The triumphs of either in any soul, is the necessary destruction of the other.

In casting about with a view to discover who are liable to be carried

away by the doctrine we oppose; it is pleasant to be assured that none who have been quickened together with Christ, can ever deny him who is their life, complete in him who is the head of all principality and power, they are already in the profession of eternal life: and we are persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come shall ever be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.

Neither are we much afraid that any who are earnestly seeking the way of life, under the anguish of a heart broken for sin, will repose for consolation on *that*, which denies the consolation of Israel. As there can be no preaching in which the divinity

of Christ is not recognised, sufficiently pungent to force the cry, "what must I do to be saved;" so it is utterly without power to heal the wounds which the truth of God has inflicted. The troubled conscience knows not its voice, nor will it heed the softest message which it sends.

Its consolations are for those only who have no trouble. It fortifies no minds but such as are oppressed with no fears. Its pardons are for those who have no sense of guilt. Its purifications are for those who feel no need of cleansing. It affords no remedy for the sickness of the soul.

On the other hand they are in danger who will not believe that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God—who are not willing to

deny themselves, to take up the cross and follow Christ—the disputers of this world who debate about religion as they debate about politics, are in danger—all who regard the services of the sanctuary, as a mere source of intellectual entertainment—all who consider religion as the mere regulator of the moral forms of the social state, all are in danger; because by none of them is religion contemplated in the sacredness of its character, in the overwhelming importance of its issues. Our youth are in danger, not only because they are liable to be captivated by the acts with which the fatal tendencies of denying the Lord Jesus are attempted to be concealed; but also because while they are flattered for their supposed virtues, and but feebly rebuked for

their real sins, they are encouraged to believe that all is well though they be not born again.

Religion should be investigated not with a view to the trial of ingenuity, or the gratification of taste, but under a sense of the manifest and tremendous evils which deform and plague the world, and with a desire to understand the nature of the remedies which God has provided against the diseases of the soul. The investigation should be made, with an humble, and teachable spirit; with a willingness to know the truth, though the discovery should mortify pride, and cover the soul with shame. Following this humility is honor; and they who are engaged in this humble patient search, will fly the enemy that would cut off the right arm of

their deliverer, and leave them defenceless in the day of wrath.

The doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ, O how precious it is. It stays the thunderbolt of God, and dissipates the cloud from the believers heaven. There is no depth of misery from which it cannot deliver; no height of glory to which it cannot exalt. Say Christian whether the name Emmanuel, God with us, does not convey a sound of joy that is heard above the roar of deep calling unto deep, in the ocean of your sorrows? Does it not convey an assurance that all is well, so long as you rest upon him on whom the whole weight of heaven is hung? What else could sustain the spirit? To whom blessed Jesus can we go?

Thou hast the words of eternal life,
and we believe and are sure that
thou art that Christ, the Son of the
Living God. Amen.

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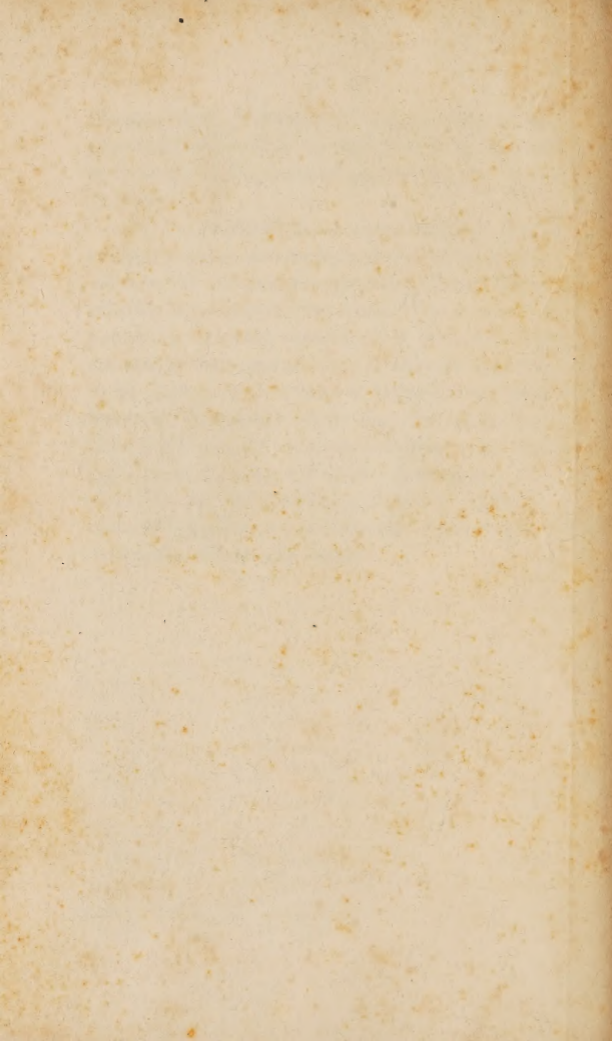
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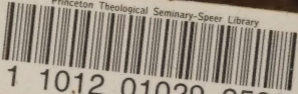
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